

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

5 Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-15 (canceled)

Claim 16 (currently amended): A data transfer method for topping up a prepaid electronic credit, in real time, associated with ~~the~~ service user over a data and telecommunication network, ~~essentially in real time~~, the method comprising the steps of:

10 defining the service user as ~~the~~ holder of a first electronic settlement account;
defining a service operator as ~~the~~ holder of a second electronic settlement account;
transmitting a transfer signal from a terminal of the service user; and
15 increasing the prepaid electronic credit, in response to the transfer signal, by a predetermined electronic sum of money and, ~~at the same time~~ in real time, transferring the sum of money from the first electronic settlement account to the second electronic settlement account.

Claim 17 (currently amended): A data transfer method for topping up a
20 prepaid electronic credit, in real time, associated with ~~the~~ service user over a data and telecommunication network as claimed in claim 16, the method further comprising the steps of:

25 managing the prepaid electronic credit on a credit management server in ~~one of~~ the data and telecommunication network ~~and a telecommunication network connected thereto~~;

managing the first and second electronic settlement accounts on an account management server in the data and telecommunication network; and
implementing a piece of money transfer software on an application server in the data and telecommunication network to assist in the data transfer.

Claim 18 (currently amended): A data transfer method for topping up a prepaid electronic credit, in real time, associated with ~~thea~~ service user over a data and telecommunication network as claimed in claim 17, the method further comprising the steps of:

- 5 setting up a connection to the application server via the terminal of the service user;
- using the terminal to transfer to the application server at least one of an authentication code and a credit identifier for the prepaid credit, an account identifier for the settlement account, and the predetermined electronic sum of money;
- 10 checking, via the application server, the transmitted data and ~~thea~~ sufficiency of the predetermined sum of money in the settlement account;
- debiting, if ~~thea~~ result of the check is positive, the predetermined sum of money from the first settlement account;
- crediting the predetermined sum of money to the second settlement account;
- 15 increasing the prepaid credit by the predetermined sum of money; and
- creating a log record for the debit/credit operation.

Claim 19 (currently amended): A data transfer method for topping up a prepaid electronic credit, in real time, associated with ~~thea~~ service user over a data and telecommunication network as claimed in claim 18, the method further comprising the

20 step of:

 transmitting, via the application server, an acknowledgment signal to the terminal of ~~thea~~ service user when the transaction has been performed.

Claim 20 (currently amended): A data transfer method for topping up a prepaid electronic credit, in real time, associated with ~~thea~~ service user over a data and telecommunication network as claimed in claim 18, the method further comprising the

25 steps of:

 automatically setting up a connection, to check the credit identifier, between the application server and the credit management server; and

 automatically setting up a connection, to check the account identifier of the settlement account, between the application server and the account management

30 server.

Claim 21 (currently amended): A data transfer method for topping up a prepaid electronic credit, in real time, associated with the service user over a data and telecommunication network as claimed in claim 18, the method further comprising the step of:

- 5 entering one of the authentication code and the credit and account identifier and the predetermined sum of money on the terminal of ~~the~~ service user via one of keyboard and voice entry under menu control.

Claim 22 (cancelled).

- 10 Claim 23 (currently amended): A data transfer method for topping up a prepaid electronic credit associated with ~~the~~ service user over a data and telecommunication network as claimed in claim ~~22~~17, the method further comprising the step of:

- transmitting, via the application server, a first and a second acknowledgment signal to the ~~first and the second service users~~service user and the service operator,
15 respectively, when a transfer has been made.

- Claim 24 (currently amended): A data transfer method for topping up a prepaid electronic credit, in real time, associated with ~~the~~ service user over a data and telecommunication network as claimed in claim 16, the method further comprising the step of:

- 20 performing at least part of the transfer operation over a mobile radio network.

 Claim 25 (currently amended): A data transfer system for topping up a prepaid electronic credit of a service user over a data and telecommunication network in real time, ~~essentially in real time~~, comprising:

- a credit counter, managed on a credit management server, for storing the
25 electronic credit;

 first and second settlement account memories on at least one account management server;

- money transfer software, implemented on an application server, for electronically transferring money from the first settlement account ~~memories~~memory
30 to the ~~credit memory~~second settlement account memory in real time, and for
 transmitting associated data to the credit memory;

a service user terminal connected to the data and telecommunication network for entering and transmitting data required for topping up the credit to the application server; and

5 a data link between the application server, the credit management server, the account management server and the service user terminal for performing data communication associated with the data transfers which tops up transfer the credit.

Claim 26 (currently amended): A data transfer system for topping up a prepaid electronic credit of a service user over a data and telecommunication network in real time as claimed in claim 25, wherein the terminal is a mobile radio terminal connected
10 to a mobile radio network.

Claim 27 (currently amended): A data transfer system for topping up a prepaid electronic credit of a service user over a data and telecommunication network in real time as claimed in claim 25, wherein the prepaid credit is stored on a prepaid card associated with a service operator and a mobile radio network.

15 Claim 28 (currently amended): A data transfer system for topping up a prepaid electronic credit of a service user over a data and telecommunication network in real time as claimed in claim 25, wherein a trigger signal is transmitted from a first the service user terminal to trigger ~~the a~~ transfer of money from the first settlement account memory to the second settlement account memory and to increase ~~the a~~ count
20 of the credit counter, and the prepaid electronic credit is associated with a second terminal.

Claim 29 (currently amended): A data transfer system for topping up a prepaid electronic credit of a service user over a data and telecommunication network in real time as claimed in claim 26, wherein the prepaid card is associated with the second
25 terminal as a mobile radio terminal.

Claim 30 (currently amended): A data transfer system for topping up a prepaid electronic credit of a service user over a data and telecommunication network as claimed in claim 25, wherein the application server has an authentication code memory and a comparison unit, connected at an input, for comparing an authentication
30 code received from the first service user terminal with a stored authentication code, and for outputting an enable signal for the payment operation if the ~~two~~ authentication code received from the service user terminal and the stored authentication code match.

Claim 31 (currently amended): A data transfer system for topping up a prepaid electronic credit of a service user over a data and telecommunication network in real time as claimed in claim 30, wherein the application server has a decoding unit for obtaining at least one of a credit and an account identifier for one of the prepaid

5 electronic credit and the settlement account from the authentication code.